

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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August 9, 2021

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Acting Chair
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel:

We write to you today regarding a simple step that the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) can take to give local radio stations — particularly minority-owned stations — the ability to better compete in today’s media marketplace.

Every type of media, from broadcast television to cable to over-the-top providers to even newspapers, has the ability to geo-target content — *except for radio*. This puts radio at a distinct disadvantage, in terms of attracting both audience and advertisers. Listeners want to hear content tailored to their location. Advertisers know their customers and want to be able to reach them specifically. The technology exists to put radio on par with cable and broadcast television, print, and digital. But one small FCC rule from the 1980s stands in the way.

The FCC recently adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”) to change that rule, giving radio broadcasters *the option* of launching geo-targeted content. We understand that the FCC has more recently granted experimental licenses to test this technology in two markets, and that the testing is currently underway with reports due to the FCC later this year.

We see this technology as particularly meaningful for minority broadcasters. Minority broadcasters by and large tend to own single stations or small station groups. In this highly-concentrated industry, they are up against well-funded interests with large market share. Minority-owned stations tend to be in diverse areas, where geo-targeted content, such as second-language content, could be particularly meaningful. Offering geo-targeted content would benefit other businesses in the area. For example, small businesses may be motivated to buy localized advertisements, when before they wouldn’t have considered radio to be good value for their money. These distinct benefits for minority broadcasters and communities are why 21 civil rights and minority groups support the proposal.

The ability to geo-target content would give radio broadcasters a way to offer better service to their specific communities, a way to promote localism and advance the public interest. We know you share these goals and hope you will promote them. We ask that you keep our offices advised of the testing and how it will inform the rulemaking process.

Sincerely,



G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN

August 30, 2021

The Honorable G.K. Butterfield
U.S. House of Representatives
2080 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Butterfield:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Federal Communications Commission's pending proceeding that seeks comment on whether to modify our rules to allow FM broadcast stations to use FM booster stations to air geo-targeted content.

I share with you an interest in promoting localism in broadcasting. It is a longstanding part of this agency's public interest assessment and a value we need to continue to support as technology changes. This is especially critical, as you note, for small station owners who often compete for listeners and advertising dollars against station groups with larger market share. Moreover, keeping a diverse group of voices on the air is important because what we hear over the public airwaves says so much about who we are as communities and as a Nation.

The record in this specific proceeding has revealed some concern about technical issues, including whether permitting booster stations to originate geo-targeted content would result in those booster stations causing interference to the primary station they are licensed to rebroadcast, potentially including emergency alerts. In order to better understand these technical concerns, the Media Bureau has granted two stations with experimental authority to test the technology, initially in San Jose, California and subsequently in Jackson, Mississippi. We recently granted an extension of time on the first station due to launch delays, and we expect the results of that testing to be submitted into the record later this year or early next year. Media Bureau staff will take these results into consideration as they review the record developed in the proceeding. Given your interest, I have asked the Bureau staff to place your letter into the record of the proceeding, and to keep your office updated on the testing results.

I hope this is helpful and appreciate your input and look forward to sharing more information as it becomes available. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Jessica Rosenworcel



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN

August 30, 2021

The Honorable Tony Cardenas
U.S. House of Representatives
2438 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jessica Rosenworcel", is written over a horizontal line.

Jessica Rosenworcel